

Endings

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I haven't figured out a name for the story yet, so this default title shall do for now. :D

Anyway, this is just a snippet of my web of thoughts surrounding a particular group of characters I created.

Hmm, I've got this idea going, and I have a few chapters of it down, but I'm not sure if I'll go through with it. I trash a lot of ideas. So, don't be surprised if the next sample of writing I put up is totally different.

And no, I do not have a title for this story. It will remain nameless until I find one.

Any critique and comments are highly appreciated.

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0 - Prologue

Prologue

It was a sunny day that August morning.

Too sunny. It was so cheerful and bright, one would say it almost sounds silly that a funeral took place during that time. Yes, the holy ritual of burying a loved one deep into the earth, literally putting the memory of them out of sight, therefore out of mind.

My poor sister. She never liked bugs, not to mention small spaces. So you can imagine how painful it was for me to watch her casket to be lowered slowly into the ground, as my father kept on looking at his watch and having that look of urgency, to go someplace else. You'd think that, as a father, this moment would be harder for him than it was for me. But strangely, it wasn't.

I was a stubborn little boy back then. I refused to cry a single tear in the midst of all those so called friends and family. They didn't deserve to share this last moment, with one of the few people I cared about with me.

I was a truly selfish boy.

The priest was murmuring his sermons and prayers, and I could feel that same tingle of rage and anger I felt when I felt my sister's hand go limp. At that moment, my belief for the Catholic god was demolished. I suppose I was jumping to conclusions back then; indeed I was naïve, for I was only 12. However, as I reminiscence on my past, it made me ponder if that was when this whole mess started, anyway. When I had the foolish idea of demolishing the very thing that life depended on.

I presume I'll never know for sure.

A tear never escaped my eyes as the people in black started walking away. They too seemed to have someplace to go, having no time to share even more than another second of their life to remember and honor the life she lead. No one to share my sadness with. As much as I hated them, I wanted someone to be pained along with me, which angered me even more. To maintain my stubborn facade was the hardest thing to do in my life.

I just wanted someone to care.

At that moment, I felt a warmth wrap around my fingers. I stared at it, just to look up and see a familiar face gazing back at me. The face belongs to a girl I know. Someone who could have very well saved me and the people around me the trouble I caused in the future to come. She wasn't the prettiest girl to look at, but she had the sort of face you'd like to see when you're sick, or when you need help. A face where you can find comfort in.

Her hand gripped mine firmly as her eyes turned glassy, whispering my name in the most sincerest voice. "Cian."

My voice choked. I was annoyed at the fact that I could feel hot tears rolling down my cheeks, just at the sound of her words. I never liked the way she could make me cry so easily.

"Aura," I choked out, heaving huge sobs, "she was only seven years old."

I cried, but didn't bother to wipe away the tears. She did nothing to embrace me or to further acknowledge her presence, but just stood by, gripping my hand. And, for some odd reason, that was enough.

The birds were chirping and the lively sounds of the city life were all around us. The noise was so loud, it was almost unbearable to see that the world truly did continue spinning after that event. But somehow, being in the console of a friend, made it all the less lonelier.

I never did thank her for all the things she has done for me.

I wish I took the chance to tell her my thoughts and feelings, but now, I'm afraid that it may be too late.

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# 1 - Discovery

## Chapter One: Discovery

*"I feel... unhappy."*

*The small individual next to the bleak woman gave a grin. "Death can have that sort of effect. Can't be helped, really." Judging from the movement of their shadow, the woman can see that a brisk wind was blowing through his - or her - long robes and hair. The problem was, she couldn't feel anything. In fact, she couldn't even see her companion, though the thought didn't perplex her.*

*"It's been... years since I've last talked to someone," she murmured, staring into the chasm of blurred images. "It's rather nice. I've forgotten how calming it was to have company."*

*The stranger nodded, white teeth gleaming out of the darkness once more in a grin. "Judging from your elaborate linen and jewelry, I can see that you came from far away... Egypt, maybe," he guessed, as the woman started to perceive the stranger as a male. "And, if that's true, it means you've been here for awhile now."*

*The woman sighed as if in agreement, brushing her golden black hair away. "I've lost count after a short time. That was when I started traveling. Egypt became too depressing for me." Her companion couldn't help but bellow in laughter.*

*"So you've been wandering this world for this long to escape depression?" cackled the small creature. He continued sarcastically, "Well, you did a good job of doing so. For a person of your position, I thought you'd have more sense than that."*

*She gave a small snort. "As if anything makes sense in the after life, or whatever this place is."*

*He stopped laughing, and from the outline of his figure, she could see that he was pondering the thought. "Good point," he said after a moment, shrugging. "But, as you can see, it's not normal for souls like you to linger this long, after life or not. Why do you think you're unable to move on? Or, can you not remember?"*

*"I can't say that I don't remember," she murmured, not giving the thought much concentration, "but, I can't say that I never knew, either. After awhile, everything just turns into a blur."*

*"That explains the scenery," agreed the shadow, reaching out to take what seemed like a small sliver of the huge blur around them. As her companion twirled the blur through his fingers, he thought aloud curiously, "What would you say if I could take you back to the world you left behind?"*

*"I'd say you're insane," she answered without hesitation, "and that it would be impossible."*

*"You don't know for sure," he grinned, "because, unlike me, you don't know my position here. I can do lots of things, whether it goes by the rules or not. In fact, you are my responsibility now, due to your inability to leave this place."*

*She shook her head and her now dull green eyes stared at the individual plainly. "No, I still wouldn't do it. It just wouldn't feel right; besides, how long has it been now? A hundred years, at least?"*

*"Actually, it's been over thousands of years," he corrected, rather smugly.*

*Again, the statement didn't faze her. "All the more reason not to go with your plan. Things change over time, and I don't think I can fit in to the world that is now."*

*The stranger was obviously frustrated, as his figure planted itself into a considerable pout. It was quiet for awhile, and for a second the woman thought she was alone again. 'Ah, well,' she thought, staring once more towards the abyss, 'good things don't last long anyway.'*

*If she was alive, she would have been startled by the sudden remark he made. He spoke quite loudly, "Do you know why you're stuck here?"*

*"You asked me this question before."*

*"Just answer," her companion snapped, his patience failing. When she gave a quick shake of her head, he continued briskly, "It's because you're not ready to leave, aren't you?"*

*That was new. The woman blinked in surprise. "No, that's not true. This is where I want to be, whether I'm happy in this place or not. I belong here."*

*"You know that you don't believe that," he said with a grin, pleased that he finally got through.*

*"There's someplace else you'd rather be, right? I can take you there, if you want me to. There is a small price however... But do you want it anyway?"*

*She was silent with thought, and soon came to realize that he was right. And she didn't like that feeling. "I don't know where I want to be, though. How can I--"*

*"It will come to you, don't worry," he said, nodding, "and when you finally find out what this place is, you'll be able to move on." The stranger flashed another glowing grin. "Of course, your death will be momentarily delayed during this period, but that doesn't seem too much of a problem, does it."*

*She stared at the huge blur around her. She's been wandering for so long, she hadn't realized how much she wanted to see what the world really was like nowadays. How much she wanted to see and feel the warmth of sunlight again. And, for some odd reason, she felt that there was still something for her to do.*

*It became clear to her quickly as to what her answer should be.*

*"I want... to start over," she replied quietly.*

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“Maeve?”

She blinked and stared at the raven haired girl peering down at her, her blue eyes seeming to give out a sparkling beam.

“I’m sorry for waking you,” she apologized, sitting beside Maeve on the couch, “but I’m looking for my blue jacket. The one with the ribbons on it? I think you sown it up last time.”

She nodded and sat up on the cushions, rubbing her forehead gently. “Oh yes, that one. It’s right over there dear, on top of the drawer,” she said, pointing to the wooden cabinet a few feet away from the guest room. As the teenager stood up to receive it, the caretaker asked slowly, “Are you going out?”

The girl turned and gave a sweet smile. “Yes, Cian and I are going to the new art exhibit downtown. He offered to drive us there as well; in fact, he should be here any minute.” Suddenly, as if on cue, the bell rang a merry tune, signifying her friend’s presence.

Although she went on her way to retrieve the visitor, Maeve stood up and blocked her way, saying, “No no, dear. As a hostess, I must answer the door.” The girl laughed and waited in the hall. Dusting off her long violet skirt and sweater, Maeve adjusted her bifocals and opened the entryway. “Ah, good afternoon Mr. Earnan. How are you today?”

The teen with silver gray hair nodded to her and stared with a surprising amount of intimidation. She had always noticed how cold he seemed to others. “Is Aura--”

“Here I am,” Aura beamed over Maeve’s shoulder with a jump, laughing. Although nothing in his expression changed, the woman could easily tell that he was ultimately glad to see her. Besides, a man she once knew was like him as well.

“I’m so short Cian,” Aura sighed, moving out of the door and leaning against his shoulder, “I barely come up to your neck. Or are you just too tall?”

“Depends on your perspective,” he answered, with an air of declaring ‘and that is that.’ She didn’t notice, and easily followed him as he grasped her hand in a quick and arid movement, looking back to wave a cheerful goodbye to her caretaker.

Maeve waved back and frowned a little. That boy has no manners.

She sensed someone walking up behind her, and a much taller and muscular figure looked out the door and waved to Aura as well with a spatula. Maeve turned and stared at the dark brown [and rather bald] head of a 22 year old.

“Leaving already? She didn’t even try my new shrimp recipe yet,” he said with disappointment, as Maeve stared at the contents inside his frying pan. He took one piece and made a gesture to her, saying, “Want some?”

“I’ll try it later Adio,” she smiled, taking the cooked shrimp and popping it into his mouth instead. “Give some to Raziya, I’m sure she would adore it.”

He nodded as he chewed, as if saying, ‘Good idea,’ and stepped back into the manor. But before he completely disappeared, he called out, “Oh, by the way, Sadiki just called from the lake. He wants to see you.”

Maeve raised an eyebrow in speculation. “What for?”

Adio shrugged, as a shrimp fell to the floor and a small golden dog raced across to eat it. “Beats me. He says it’s important though.” Grinning at the dog, he said, “C’mon, Reggie,” and followed the canine into the kitchen.

She sighed as she took a jacket from the coat rack and opened the door once more. There was rarely an occasion when Sadiki needed to meet her that *wasn’t* important. “I wonder what he found out,” she thought aloud to herself.

With that as a final note, she stepped into the brisk wind, wrapped the coat even firmer around her, and closed the door.

2 - Secrets

Chapter Two: Secrets

Maeve wasn't surprised to see that Sadiki was sitting at his usual spot on the wooden bench, overlooking the pale surface of the lake. It was glittering from the slowly setting sun and was actually quite a pretty sight, so she made a mental note to come out here more often. Although her vision was limited, she could tell by his arm gestures that he was possibly feeding the ducks some bread crumbs. She smiled at the thought of that; even though he never wants to admit it, he is a kind boy.

As she passed the grove of young oak trees surrounding the small lake, she could see that Sadiki's features became clearer, his eminent scowl fresh across his face due to an unpleasant event. When Maeve finally came within distance of him, she heard language that she would prefer not hearing pouring out of his mouth like a running faucet.

"Damn," he said, realizing his fifth attempt to have the small duckling follow the bread crumb failed. He threw again, and to his dismay, the baby bird just looked at him curiously with its beady eyes. "Damn," he repeated once more.

"I do hope you aren't learning that fowl language from home," she said despairingly, gesturing him to scoot over and sitting down with a sigh. "Silly boy, making me walk all the way here with my fragile bones." Sadiki's golden eyes rang with obvious annoyance as Maeve made a sad attempt at showing her weariness.

"Don't talk like that, it doesn't suit you," he said plainly, glancing at her with a raised eyebrow, "or your appearance. You barely look older than me."

"I am older than you, and everyone in the house put together, three fold," she stated, patting his brown hair. Then, in an all too motherly way, she tightened the low ponytail on his head. "You of all people know that."

"Hmph," he grumbled, returning to his previous engagement of throwing bread crumbs. "It still doesn't suit you." She politely ignored his comment and grabbed a handful of crumbs to throw herself.

When she was finished with her first batch and reached for another handful, she asked curiously, "So, what did you want to see me about? It's nothing too alarming for you, I hope."

"It shouldn't be as alarming as when I found out how old you really were," Sadiki replied, now trying to get the ducklings to come closer to him. "I couldn't sleep for days after that. Did you know I had a crush on you when I was little? I knew there was a big age gap already, but knowing that info just completely ruined it." He had a slight flush and pout to his face as he reminiscence on his childhood.

She laughed, but was a little embarrassed herself, now that Sadiki was a rather handsome young man.

“Yes, I remember well. Yet to this day I still can’t understand why.”

“It’s not really that hard to see,” he admitted, eyeing her cynically. “You are pretty, in your own sort of way; I can see why he likes you - well, used to anyway.” Sadiki shrugged and began wiggling his finger to the duckling, as its beak snapped down on it. “Ow, that hurt, you little son of a--”

“Well,” she calmly interrupted, trying to keep her mind off the man Sadiki was referring to, “I suspect that you know about the dream I had earlier today, yes?”

Sadiki nodded and scowled at the bird as he caressed his defeated finger. “I can tell by the colors strands around you. Though this one you didn’t seem very flustered about. Is that how you first met that creature?”

Maeve sighed and nodded back. For a moment, she almost forgot about his uncanny ability to sense other people’s thoughts and dreams, even though he often does not acknowledge it. In fact, she doesn’t believe that even the rest of the household knows of it, yet it helped her take the other children through many restless a night. Except for Aura. For some reason, he couldn’t see her ‘color strands,’ as he describes them. But before she could speculate more on the thought, her attention turned toward Sadiki as he continued speaking.

“So that thing said it could bring you back to life, and, since you’re sitting here with me, I can see it didn’t lie,” he acknowledged, tossing the empty bag into the trash can a few feet away from him. “What happened next?”

“That’s what you need to figure out,” she replied. “My memory is a blur when it comes to the stranger, so I can’t remember anything else unless you see it through my strands.” But Maeve saw quickly that she didn’t need to say so, for Sadiki was already staring intently at the air around her.

It didn’t take long for her to get an answer. “I’ve seen that thing before,” he said with a good amount of confidence, wrapping his black windbreaker tighter around him. “And from what I’ve seen, this wasn’t the first time it did this.”

Maeve’s heart sank at the thought of it. “Really now,” she murmured, with a mild amount of interest and displeasure. “So there are others like me?”

“Obviously,” Sadiki replied with sarcasm, “but in your case, you’ve been around the longest.” Her face was sober as she comprehended the fact. She wasn’t surprised to comprehend that other people had went through an ordeal like she had. However, Maeve was shocked to realize that she’s been through it the longest. Was there something wrong with her, or is it just that she was more unlucky than they were?

She knew that if she continued to think about it, it would only upset her more. So, Maeve decided to move on the discussion. “Well, is there anything else you’ve found out for me?”

Sadiki sighed and watched as the ducklings finally swam back into the water. “Not unless you’re willing to tell me your entire history thus far.”

With a nod of understanding, Maeve stood up and murmured, “I’m pretty sure you can figure out my

history on your own. I'm not too comfortable talking about it yet, if you don't mind."

The 19 year old shrugged and sat back against the bench. "Fine with me. I'm okay with waiting a little longer; besides, it's your memories." Brushing his hair through with his left hand, he continued, "Meet you at home later? I still have some business to attend to." He eyed the birds in the water with some amount of determination while speaking.

Maeve smiled and nodded as she brushed off her skirt and started walking away. But before she was even a few feet apart from him, she knew that she could not leave contently without knowing. Without turning back, Maeve asked quietly, "About Ryes... How is he?"

He was silent for a moment, watching the sun ever so slowly set behind the trees. "He seems fine, from the last time I saw him. His company is doing well, and I hear that he's going to be married soon. I think his fiancé is a famous ballet dancer or something," he stated, turning his head to stare at her. For once she was glad that he couldn't see her expression.

"I see," she replied slowly, unsure of what to think of. Maeve was surprised in spite of herself to see that she was deeply saddened about Ryes' proposal, and even a little jealous. Looking down, she found that her hands were clenching at her jacket in ferocious grips, with little tremors here and there. She was angry.

"Well, I best be off now," she said quickly, turning and trying to give a pleasing smile as possible. Unfortunately, Sadiki didn't buy into it. "Come home safely." And with a fast wave, she trotted away until she disappeared behind the curve of the hill.

He waved just as she left, then stared back at the horizon. The sky had a lovely hue of orange and violet and blue, which mixed together nicely with the yellow sun. The trees seemed to agree with this thought as it swayed in the quiet breeze, bristling with every leaf. Sadiki always liked this place. It was the most peaceful spot he could find and with strands coming only from nature itself.

Rolling up his sleeve, he glanced at his watch to see what the time was. Seeing that he had a certain amount of time until nightfall, Sadiki decided that he wanted to grab a bite to eat before he went home. Standing up and giving a nice stretch, he kicked a pebble into the lake as he started to walk back on the path.

Sadiki did a double take as he saw a man in a black business suit in front of him, his gray eyes solemn and cold. After recovering from a bit of shock and an increase in heart beat, Sadiki scratched his head as he called out, "Didn't expect to see you here Ryes. Do you want to see Maeve, because she just left."

The man named Ryes seemed to glare at him, but Sadiki knew that it was just his usual expression. "You gelled your hair back. Kind of ruins the mystery about you, doesn't it?" The boy asked with a smirk.

"I don't have time for small chatter," he snapped, swiping his hand across his brown hair out of habit. Sadiki had to admit that he was a bit startled; Ryes' presence always seemed to demand respect. "I need assistance, and it's assistance that only you can offer."

Sadiki raised his eyebrows. "What's wrong?"

"Someone found out," Ryes answered. "They know our secret."